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**MARCH 25, 1954**

Shortly after I was inaugurated as Governor in January, 1951, you did me the honor to invite me to address your association. I discussed the educational program then pending in the Legislature which subsequently was enacted into law.

The years that have passed have been crowded years. So many exciting things have happened in our lives that it may not be inappropriate for me to recall some of the significant developments of that program.

You and I have been partners in what has been called an educational revolution. I am proud to have been associated with you in that revolution.

Instead of 1,200 school districts, we now have only 102. The one-teacher schools of the rural areas have almost all been abandoned. Since 1951 the consolidated program has eliminated 824 of our inferior schools in rural areas. Of these, 287 were white schools and 537 Negro schools.

The former students of those schools are now in consolidated schools and possess educational opportunities equal to the opportunities afforded boys and girls of the cities.

The consolidation of schools has brought about a great increase in the number of students transported in buses to school. In 1950-51 under the district transportation systems 142,00 pupils rode school buses daily at an average cost of \$24.77 per year. Under the State system last year 203,000 children rode the buses daily at an annual per capita cost of only \$16.55.

The number of Negro students being transported has increased from 29,166 in 1951 to 78,567 in 1954. Substantial equality with the transportation of white pupils has been attained.

The operation of this transportation system is big business. It has presented to the State Commission as well as local officials many difficult problems. The Commission has received wonderful cooperation from most school officials. However, there still are some who think the law was made for "the other fellow."

It is obvious to all thinking people that the State cannot operate a taxi service and have a bus stop at the door for every child. To do this, the bus would have to start much earlier in the morning and would reach the end of the route much later in the afternoon. Certainly we would have to purchase several hundred more buses.

The teachers have done a magnificent job in encouraging the parents of children to be patient about transportation problems, and I feel confident that before long the relatively minor complaints that remain will be satisfactorily adjusted.

Teachers should realize that the greatly increased cost of transportation would have to come out of the funds available for public schools. The more money that is paid for one purpose, the less money will be available for other purposes, including teachers' compensation.

Most of us are opposed to any change in our habits. Many of us prefer to remain in a rut rather than risk a change. Therefore, it is really remarkable that our people so quickly have accustomed themselves to so many changes in the school system vitally affecting the lives of children and parents.

Our people have great pride in a school house. It is the community meeting place. Around it hovers much sentiment. But disregarding community pride and sentiment, the people of many communities have consented to abandon the local school building in order that their children might attend a consolidated school with greater opportunities for educational advancement.

Of course, this revolutionary program has cost a lot of money. We are forced to do in a few years what our fathers and grandfathers should have done during the past seventy-five years.

To pay for it a sales tax was levied. That tax will produce \$47,000,000.00 revenue this year. But it takes an additional \$20,000,000.00 from other sources to meet our public school budget of \$67,000,000.00. This budget must be compared with \$36,000,000.00 a year spent by the State for the public schools when I became Governor.

The school building program enacted by the Legislature provided for completion of construction in 20 years. During that period \$176,000,000.00 will be spent by the State for school buildings. It will be paid for out of sales tax revenue.

We have moved at a much faster rate by the issuance of bonds. At first the limitation on the issuance of bonds was \$75,000,000.00, at any one time. It has been increased to \$100,000,000.00. Bonds were issued to enable some school districts to borrow immediately part of the sum to which they would be entitled during the 20 years, and promptly equalize school facilities as between the races.



The State Educational Finance Commission of which I am Chairman has allocated \$94,000,000.00 out of the proceeds of bonds issued and the sales tax revenue.

Negro schools have received two-thirds of the total allocation. When these buildings have been constructed, there will be substantially equal building facilities in those particular counties.

When we consider that Negro pupils comprise only 229,000 of the public schools enrollment of 525,000, the figures as to funds allocated mean that an average of \$106.00 has been allocated for each white pupil and \$271.00 for each Negro pupil.

In the future more consideration will be given applications for white schools and more consideration will be given to the districts which have borrowed less than others.

I would not give you the impression I think an educational program consists only of buildings and buses. More important is the character and capabilities of the teachers in the schools.

If ever a group of persons deserved the plaudits of the people for outstanding and sacrificial service, it is the teachers of South Carolina.

When I became Governor, I was surprised to learn of the inadequate compensation received by our teachers. I realized they would not continue in their profession unless they felt they were called to give their time and talents to the children of the State.

But we have made some progress. In the past three years the State contribution to teachers' salaries has increased 43 per cent.

The State aid increases should have been added to the supplements paid by the various districts. However, I have learned recently, to my regret, that when State contribution was increased, the supplement paid in some districts was reduced so that some teachers actually received little increase.

Even where the district supplement was not reduced, the total compensation of South Carolina teachers is less than that of the teachers in adjoining States. This should not be allowed to continue.

It is folly to continue spending public funds in State colleges to train teachers if we are not going to offer those teachers substantially the same compensation they can receive in adjoining States.

Because there is always a dispute as to the comparative salary schedules, I intend to confer with the Governors and have some of

our school officials confer with the school officials of our adjoining States and see if we can agree on the facts as to salary schedules.

The Governors and school officials cannot bind a Legislature to equalize compensation, but we could place at the disposal of the Legislatures of the several States an agreed statement of facts.

South Carolina is no longer the poorest member of the family of States. We are able to provide compensation equal to that of neighboring States. And we should do it.

An increase in the compensation of our teachers should not be delayed pending such an investigation. It is true the Legislature provided no increase in the contribution of the State toward teachers' salaries. But the Legislature did appropriate \$4,500,000.00 of surplus funds to the counties, to be used for public school purposes.

The legislative delegation of a county can use some of the county's portion of the four and one-half million dollars to pay the teachers a bonus or increase of salary. I do not care what they call it. I hope it will be done in every county.

There are some other problems. I want to see a reduction in the maximum number of pupils permitted in any class. While the State average per class is not unreasonable, many classes have double the number of pupils that one teacher should be expected to instruct.

This is a two-fold evil. The child does not receive the proper instruction and the teacher carries too great a load.

I want to see all double shifts eliminated from our schools. Double shifts require packing into a few hours instruction and activities which should be spread over a normal school day. Pupils should not be required to reach school too early in the morning nor to stay too late in the afternoon.

When I spoke to you in March, 1951, I referred to the school segregation case from Clarendon County, which at that time had not been argued in Court. I tried to impress you and the people of our State with the seriousness of the problem.

At that time there was in our State Constitution a provision that the General Assembly should provide a free public school system for all children between 6 and 21 years of age. That provision has now been repealed. And despite the opposition arguments you heard when the constitutional amendment was pending in 1952, not one school door has been closed.

There is another provision in our Constitution that "separate schools shall be provided for children of the white and colored races, and no child of either race shall ever be permitted to attend a school provided for children of the other race."

I am sworn to uphold that Constitution. I have tried to discharge my duty under that oath.

I am not willing to concede that the United States Supreme Court will render an adverse decision in the Clarendon case. But no man can tell what the Court will do.

Should the Court reverse the law of the land and decide against the Clarendon School District, what course I would advocate would depend upon the language of the decision. I would first confer with the committee appointed to consider the problem in the event of such a decision. What course would be followed would be determined by the Legislature.

In 1951, before this case was argued, I said to you that "If the Court changes what is now the law of the land, we will if it is possible live within the law, preserve the public school system and at the same time maintain segregation. If that is not possible, reluctantly we will abandon the public school system."

The leaders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People deliberately misrepresented my statement. Their misrepresentations were accepted as true by many enemies of the South who apparently want to create hatred and discord between the races.

These critics quoted me as saying that I personally would close the public schools. That is false. It is also silly. School children know that only the Legislature could close the public schools. My statement of what "we" would do was an expression of opinion as to what the Legislature would do.

Our enemies have ignored the word "reluctantly" which I used in referring to the last resort of abandoning public schools. I emphasized "reluctantly" because in view of all the sacrifices we are making to preserve the public school system, certainly that would be the last resort of the Legislature.

I was confident the Legislature would explore every possible plan to stay within the decision of the United States Supreme Court and still comply with the Constitution of South Carolina to keep the races separate in our schools.



In that speech to you I stated: "Every child in the State, white or colored, should have the opportunity for a full public school education. It must be our goal to see that each of them accepts that opportunity."

Further I said: "\* \* \* It must be the duty of the humane white people of the State as individuals to see that innocent Negro children are not deprived of an education because of false leaders. Certainly that would be my goal."

I have never seen those statements quoted. Our enemies have taken a part of one sentence out of a speech to justify the criticism that the people of South Carolina and the Governor of the State are prejudiced against the Negro.

I am not conscious of such prejudice. I want to see our colored citizens progress and prosper. I have tried to help them.

I have not confined my efforts to providing Negroes equal facilities in our public schools and in transportation to the schools.

I secured from the General Education Board a grant of \$500,000.00 for the State College at Orangeburg. I urged upon the Legislature a program under which that college now has under way a building program of two and one-half million dollars. I secured additional appropriations for increased compensation for the faculty, which is more important than buildings.

I led a successful fight to improve the facilities for Negroes at the mental hospital and to establish a training school for mentally defective Negro children similar to the white school at Clinton.

In my message to the Legislature and in personal conversations I urged priority for my request for \$500,000.00 to provide a building and equipment for Negro women at the State Tubercular Hospital. Soon it will be under construction.

I was not forced by court action to do these things. I have done them because I believed they were right.

No misrepresentation or abuse by politicians will deter me from continuing to help the Negroes of South Carolina to progress and prosper.

I firmly believe that were it not for the interference by politicians from Northern States, the vast majority of Negroes in South Carolina would be satisfied with facilities in colored schools equal to those of white schools.

They are entitled to that equality.

What some of our people, white and colored, do not understand is that the sponsors of this lawsuit are interested primarily in a social program. They are not so concerned with the education of Negro children.

In the Clarendon County School District where this litigation arose, there are 2,657 Negro students and only 294 white students. That is nine to one.

We know if in that District 3 white children are forced into a class with 27 Negroes it would not improve the education of either the Negro or white children.

And that would be true where the school population is more equally divided. Instead of thinking about mathematics, the children would be thinking of race relations.

Racial conflicts between children would result in conflicts between parents. I fear that hatred and discord would supplant the peaceful relations now existing.

What many people throughout the country do not realize is that mixed schools where the population is equally divided presents a different problem from mixed schools where the Negro population is only a small percentage of the total.

By our sacrifices we have proved our devotion to the public schools. Our present system of public schools is dear to us, but the preservation of racial integrity is even dearer.

An adverse decision by the Supreme Court would present the most serious problem that has confronted this generation.

Unless we find a legal way of preventing the mixing of races in the schools, it will mark the beginning of the end of civilization in the South as we have known it. To protect that civilization we must depend upon ourselves.

In our midst there may be some candidates for office who will act like the scalawags of old and secretly make pledges to the N. A. A. C. P. in order to secure political support in the approaching election. They should be discovered and defeated.

We must remember that the trustees of only one school district are parties to the Clarendon school case. Regardless of which way the Court decides that case, it is entirely possible there will be litigation



for some time. Many of the problems may have to be solved by the next Governor and the next Legislature.

Upon us there rests a great responsibility. We should elect as Governor and as members of the Legislature men whose character, training and experience best qualify them for leadership.

I said we must depend upon ourselves. That is not right. We must not do that. We must ask for divine guidance. We must earnestly pray that Almighty God will give to those who lead us the wisdom to know what is right and the courage to do the right.